

ROOM TO PRAY - A fast from criticism

As part of our Room To Pray program for 2018, we invited women to pray and fast in April as a way of preparing their hearts for our Baptist Women's April Conference.

This Thanksgiving, we invite you to pray and fast from criticism.

In her book, *A Closer Walk*, Catherine Marshall reflects on the fast from criticism she did one day. "For the first half of the day, I simply felt a void, almost as if I had been wiped out as person . . . I listened to others and kept silent . . . I noticed that my comments were not missed."

She then writes that during the second half of the day, she was filled with a vision of joy for someone for whom she'd prayed for many years. God showed her that a critical spirit: "makes us unhappy; blocks the positive creative thoughts God wants to give us; prevents good relationships; blocks the work of the Spirit of God . . ."

Fasting from criticism teaches us that the most effective way of dealing with those thoughts is to be silent. Before we ever blurt out a single word of judgment or criticism about a brother or sister, we

should take those words to Jesus and allow HIM to shoulder our sin. He is able.

The goal of our fast?

That the Lord would do such a deep work in our hearts that the words that come out of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts would be acceptable to Him. (Psalm 19:4)

THE PLAN

- 1** Mark off **Monday, October 1 – Sunday, October 7** in your calendar. This will be the week when you fast.
- 2** Decide that you will not criticize *anybody* about *anything* during these days.
- 3** Follow the prayer prompts and questions provided (or choose other Scriptures to direct your prayers). *As you pray and fast using these prompts, daily ask the Holy Spirit to keep words of criticism out of your mouth.*
- 4** Keep a record (journal). What words and thoughts filled your mind and heart? Write down your prayers of repentance, the names of people whom you may have hurt with your words and whose forgiveness you need. Record any encouraging words you receive from the Lord as you pray and fast throughout the week.
- 5** Let Baptist Women know how it went. Perhaps your experience will encourage other women. Reach out to our Facebook community or email the office.



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PRAYER PROMPTS

Psalm 19:14 (NIV)

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Ask yourself: "What is on my mind most of the time—the thing I think about the most—if I'm honest?"

Psalm 141:3 (NIV)

Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

As you make a point to avoid words of criticism, ask the Lord throughout the day: "What words would you have me speak?" Pay attention to how God helps guard your lips and invite Him to put His words in your mouth.

Proverbs 12:18 (NIV)

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Ask yourself: "Is there anyone I've offended with my words whose forgiveness I need to seek?"

Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Ask yourself: How can I become more intentional about speaking words of praise and adoration to the Lord on a daily basis?"

Mark 1:64 (NIV)

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

Ask yourself: When do I need to be silent? When do I need to speak out and what do my words need to be?

Proverbs 15:4 (NIV)

The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

Ask yourself: Who has spoken words of life to me? How different would my life be if those words had never been spoken?

2 Samuel 23:2 (NIV)

The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.

Ask yourself: How can I become confident that when I speak, the Holy Spirit will speak through me?